

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, as the 106th Congress comes to a close, I would like to highlight the achievements of this Republican Congress, achievements which I think make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

This Republican Congress is paying down the national debt, boosting education funding, and providing prescription drug coverage for millions of seniors, just to name a few of its significant accomplishments.

To expand on these, Madam Speaker, we reduced the national debt by more than \$500 billion, that is half a trillion dollars, and devoted 100 percent of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds to strengthen retirement security.

Also, Republicans increased funding for education by more than \$2 billion over the last year. We have given parents and local school officials, not Washington bureaucrats, more control over Federal education dollars.

Madam Speaker, we have also worked to ensure that in America no senior has to choose between putting food on the table and medicine in the cabinet. Our Republican \$40 billion plan establishes a voluntary, affordable prescription drug benefit that is available to every senior.

I am confident that history will be as good to this Republican-led Congress as we have been to the American people.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

TRIBUTE TO GAIL WEISS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, my colleagues are all aware of my impending departure at the end of this Congress. Since my announcement, not a day has gone by without someone wishing me their best or an organization or a university giving me a tribute in acknowledgment of my commitment to their causes.

For 32 years, I have served in this body representing the people of Missouri, but Madam Speaker, there is another person who has served beside me for those 32 years and will also leave this House at the end of this session. She was never elected to this body, never placed her signature on the corner of any bill that was placed in the hopper, but she has had a great impact on the proceedings of this House. That person, Madam Speaker, is Gail Weiss, the Democratic staff director of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

At the end of the Johnson administration, she was a young legislative liaison in the Office of Economic Opportunity who chose not to stay on for the new Nixon administration. I was a new Member in need of a legislative assistant who knew the issues of my committee assignment, education and labor. Gail came to work for me, and other than for a brief sabbatical to live in London working for a British member of parliament, she has been at my side for the entire 32 years.

After a few years in my personal office, she additionally has assisted me on the Education and Labor staff, then the Post Office and Civil Service staff, where she became the queen of amending the Hatch Act. For 20 years, she carried the torch to grant political rights to Federal and postal workers, and finally stood proudly by my side as President Clinton signed my bill into law allowing for those rights. This was shortly after she stood by my side as President Clinton signed his first bill into law, another piece of Clay legislation that Gail helped to enact, the Family and Medical Leave Act.

As the last staff director of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, she turned out the lights after my colleagues from the majority abolished that committee. She did so with a smile and the resolve that showed she was dedicated to serving this House. No words or phrases could tear down the commitment she had to help fight to improve the lives of working families and to raise the standard of living for the less fortunate among us.

Dedication and commitment are words often bantered about in tributes to Members of this House, but rarely have words so aptly described a staff member. Gail's demeanor has always been predicated upon hard work. Ask any of her colleagues to describe her, and they will always say fair, frank, honest, and hard working. She lived by the motto of never asking anyone to do anything that she would not do. There is no doubt about her toughness, her tenacity, and her frank New York mannerisms. But at the end of the battle, she always has a smile on her face.

When our party lost control of this House, many wondered how we could protect the ideals and philosophy that we were committed to. Gail helped to find a way to do just that. When I informed her that we would lose 75 percent of the staff we had operated with, she just smiled and thought of how we could get jobs for those who were leaving.

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So I am very fortunate that Gail has been committed to my legislative ideas. We all are blessed by the dedication of great staff members. But 32 years, 16 Congresses is a tenure of service rarely achieved. There are few legislative types that have served as long as Gail.

I once said that she was my fair lady. But she is one of the fairest ladies to have graced this House. I ask that my colleagues join me in expressing our thanks, appreciation, and admiration for her service, loyalty, and friendship. Because of her presence, my service in this House, in this Congress, has been for the better.

So, Madam Speaker, I thank Gail, my fair lady, for helping to make that possible.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order tonight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

RETIREMENT OF HON. TILLIE FOWLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise now to honor one of our colleagues who will be sorely missed next year in the United States House of Representatives, my good friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. TILLIE FOWLER).

TILLIE and I were both elected to Congress in 1992. As Members of the Class of 1992, we quickly became close friends. I consider her one of my best friends and confidants here in the House. She was a true friend through some of the toughest times of my personal life and professional career. She was a tremendous source of strength for me, and I will never ever forget her for that.

I have a great amount of admiration for TILLIE FOWLER. She has served the people of the Fourth District of Florida and our Nation with distinction, and I am so proud of her.

I have been privileged to serve in the Republican leadership with her. After her 1998 election, she was elected Vice Chair of the Republican Conference, making her the highest ranking woman in all of Congress.

I feel it so appropriate that TILLIE holds this position because I know for me and for many of my colleagues that she has been a true leader among leaders. She is a tough negotiator, a strong voice, and she never wavered from her heartfelt convictions.

As a senior Republican woman on the House Committee on Armed Services, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) has demonstrated her expertise on defense issues. She has gained a reputation as a leading advocate of a